

# THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MISS GRISWOLD

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It was past midnight when the door-bell rang with insistent din, rousing me from a reverie which bordered close upon dreamland. A few moments later when the maid entered the study in breathless haste I saw that she was followed by another, who, unable to restrain his eagerness, had obtruded his presence without waiting for formal announcement.

He was a medium sized man, well dressed, prosperous looking and wild eyed. Some great commotion stirred him so that his manner was abrupt and precipitous.

"Mr. Purdue" he exclaimed interrogatively, approaching close to my



"I WANT YOU TO FIND MY DAUGHTER," he said. "I'm Mr. Griswold—Henry Griswold of Fifth avenue."

I rose and motioned him to a seat, but he continued standing.

"I'm in great trouble, and I've come to you for help. The police are helpless and hopeless. They're no better than amateurs."

"Pardon me," I interrupted sharply, "but if the case is so serious no time can be lost in emotional weakness. What is it you want of me?"

"I want you to find my daughter—Helen Griswold. You know her?"

"I've heard of her," I responded. "But I did not know that she was lost."

"No, no; of course not," the broken hearted banker and father continued. "We kept it from the papers. The police advised it. But now—now—"

I handed him a glass of brandy and waited for it to quiet and strengthen his nerves. I warned him to be brief and coherent in his story so that I should not be misled.

"There is little enough to tell," he said finally. "Two nights ago a party of us visited Chinatown. It was a fool expedition headed by Bromley. He said he knew all the joints and optimum dens and that a night of slumming would be amusing. Well, we went down to Mott street and visited all of the Chinese joints, restaurants and theaters. It was a bore to me, but the young people enjoyed it."

"How many were in the party?" I asked, mentally jotting down notes.

"Only six of us—my wife and daughter, Bromley and Henry Valentine and his sister Jennie. They were all eager to see everything, and they dragged me around until midnight. The last we visited was a disreputable place kept by Sing Tung. It was a queer joint, filled with strange Chinese idols and divided into many compartments by silk draperies and paper partitions. Bromley said the owner was a wealthy Chinaman and one of the highlanders, whatever that means."

"I didn't take much stock in his talk until—until it happened."

"What happened?" I asked to recall the man to his story after a few moments in which he sobbed again.

"She—she—my daughter disappeared," he moaned, "right under our eyes. She was spirited away. A noise outside had attracted our attention to the window. Helen was tired and remained seated a few feet back of us. When we turned she was gone. We hunted for her and threatened the Chinamen, but they knew nothing about her. They refused to tell anything. We got desperate, and while Bromley ran for the police the rest of us searched the house, tearing down the draperies and upsetting the pictures and idols. But it was no use. Helen had been spirited away, and—"

I waited patiently and motioned for him to continue.

"And the police were no more successful," the banker added.

With some difficulty I calmed the man sufficiently to get a few further necessary details from him and then dismissed him.

It must have been twenty minutes later when the "Chinese puzzle," as I facetiously had to term it, was slowly unfolding itself that I was disturbed by the maid's sudden appearance again.

"A Chinaman, sir, wishes to see you," she announced.

A stout, well fed oriental appeared. He was dressed in his native costume, but a glance showed me that he was a man of wealth and influence among his people. I was still further surprised when he addressed me in good English.

"I come to you, Mr. Purdue, to help me in a great trouble," he explained, after a low bow. "I am a man of influence among my people and they re-

spect me. I have wealth and will reward you. I must clear my name of all dishonor. The police, they not believe me, but I know you will. They suspect me and they hound me. They follow me here and watch me all the time. I know not what to do unless you help me."

"What is it they suspect you of?" I asked quietly. "But, first, your name and address."

"It is Sing Tung, and there is my place of business. I am a merchant and respectable."

I took the proffered card with a little involuntary start. Was it a coincidence or a well defined oriental plan for the man who was suspected of spiriting away Helen Griswold in his own establishment within half an hour after the outraged father had called upon me?

"Be seated a moment," I said, wishing time to study the situation.

With oriental calmness he related in substance the story of the mysterious disappearance of Helen Griswold as told to me twenty minutes before by her father. The only difference was in the ending.

This was as follows: "When the noise outside attracted their attention I walked to the window, too, and looked out. Then I heard some one ask, 'Where's Helen?' I turned then to look. The beautiful girl was gone. We all looked for her, but she was nowhere. They accused me of taking her away, and the police threatened me. What can I do? I know nothing about it. I come to you for help."

I felt that the man was lying, but I refrained from saying so. By taking his case I might be able to get some light on the subject.

Half an hour later Sing Tung guided me to his home. The place was already in the hands of the police and the house was practically guarded and watched on every side.

It had been an ordinary dilapidated brick building constructed in the days when Dutchmen dwelt in the neighborhood of Mott street as the fashionable section of New York, but strange and wondrous changes and transformations had been made in the house during successive ages of occupation.

Sing Tung, with evident innocence, showed me all of the secret places of the house, explaining in elaborate detail the uses to which the different rooms were put.

"How many Chinamen were in the house the night of the disappearance?" I asked Sing Tung casually.

"One besides myself—Wing Tung, my son—and he's held at police headquarters."

"Where was he standing when Miss Griswold disappeared?"

"He was upstairs in the back room. He came down when he heard the noise. He was looking for his cloak."

"Did he find it?"

This question was asked merely to keep the Chinaman talking while I could study his face.

"No; the cloak was gone. It was nowhere in the house."

I was instantly alert. If the cloak had disappeared it had probably been used to cover Miss Griswold in her hurried and mysterious kidnaping.

"Describe the cloak," I commanded in rather peremptory tones.

"It was a beautiful cloak of blue silk, embroidered with peacocks in gold. It was a gift to me from a friend in China. No such cloak was ever made in this country. My son valued it highly."

"And he couldn't find it anywhere in the house, nor the police either?"

After a moment of silence I asked meaningly, "Where do you suppose the cloak is now, Sing Tung?"

For the first time his eyes showed change, and an expression of wrath or fear entered his immobile face. He was quiet for a moment and then added:

"It was a magic cloak, they say. My son believed it, but I do not. It was woven for one of our idols in China. There is a story that it shielded a pair of lovers from the vengeance of the authorities, and it was stripped from the idol by profane hands, but its spell and magic lasted. Once on the shoulders of a lover, no harm could befall the wearer. It had the power of shielding."

"And spiriting away," I interrupted sarcastically.

The Chinaman's face showed sudden grief and sorrow.

"You do not believe it," he added slowly, "and you distrust me."

"No," I interrupted, "not you, Sing Tung, but your son. We must find the magic cloak, and then I think we'll find Miss Griswold."

"Yes; if you find the cloak Miss Griswold will be found too."

It was quite evident to me by this time that the old Chinaman was not concerned in the spiriting away of Helen Griswold, but in his desire to shield his son I thought he would go to any lengths to deceive me. The story of the magic cloak was intended merely as a blind.

The following morning an advertisement in the morning papers offering a reward for any one who could give information about a blue silk cloak with peacocks worked in gold on it brought me several replies. After an hour's study of these I sifted them down to one. This seemed genuine and the others "fakes."

Down by the water front on West street an old waterman assured me that on the night of the disappearance

of Miss Griswold he had rowed a couple out to a small schooner yacht anchored in midstream and that one of them was partly concealed by a cloak of the description I gave. It was very dark, but the waterman saw the dangle of the gold embroidered peacocks in the moonlight.

"Did you get the name of the yacht?" I asked anxiously.

"No, but I heard one of 'em give the order to go up the East river through Hell Gate," was the reply.

With a fair description of the yacht, obtained from my informer, I lost no time in chartering a tug and sailing up the sound in pursuit of the elusive blue silk cloak.

Toward night I was considering the advisability of returning to the city when in the moonlight we discovered a boat in distress near one of the rocky islets which are sprinkled along the north shore of the sound. The boat had evidently run too close to the rocky islet, and it was stranded on it. In the darkness we could not make out the size or character of the craft, but when we hailed it a voice responded:

"Hello! Can you take us off? We've been shipwrecked two days here."

A small boat was rowed alongside of the stranded craft, and when, in company with two of the tug's crew, I climbed aboard a light of joy entered my eyes. The yacht was a two masted schooner, and on either side near the stern the sides were blackened and scarred.

A young man greeted us. He was so handsome and strong looking that I re-embodied the thought of implicating him in any plot to kidnap the daughter of Henry Griswold, New York's most prominent banker and financier.

"We're mighty glad to see you," he said. "We've been signaling for help for two days now, but nobody saw us. We want to get back to the shore tonight."

"How many have you aboard?" I asked, walking across the deck of the yacht, "and what are their names?"

"It is necessary to take names?" he asked a little anxiously.

"Shipwrecked people generally give their names."

"But I—in this case—if you could keep the matter quiet."

I suddenly interrupted his sentence and strode away. The flash of something at the head of the companionway startled me. In the pale moonlight I was sure that I saw gold peacocks on a field of blue.

"I am afraid that all depends upon what sort of story you can give me," I replied slowly. Then, fearing trouble, I decided to adopt strenuous methods at once. The crew of the disabled yacht stood back of the man, and they outnumbered us two to one.

"You need not give your name to me," I answered, approaching him, "but later you can give it at headquarters. For the present you are my prisoner."

The man started back, paled a little and then, seeing that I held a weapon in my hand, laughed harshly.

"So you have trapped us! If it hadn't been for this confounded rock, we'd given every one the slip. Well, I suppose we may as well give up."

"Yes; it may prove dangerous to offer resistance. But where is your prisoner in the cabin?"

"Prisoner? He started in unfeigned astonishment. 'Miss Griswold, you mean?'"

"Yes, Miss Griswold," I answered.

"Oh, she's there in the cabin, but I didn't know she was a prisoner."

Before our eyes a fair vision suddenly appeared, wearing over her head and shoulders a blue silk cloak with golden peacocks scattered over it. She walked straight toward us and inquired, "What is the trouble, Lawrence?"

"They've caught us, Helen. This man holds me a prisoner and—"

"For what?" was the indignant interruption.

"For kidnaping," I replied, somewhat weakly.

A light, silvery peal of laughter was my answer. That some mistake had been made slowly dawned upon me, and I lowered my weapon.

"You can probably explain your presence here, Miss Griswold," I said coldly. "I am open to conviction, but matters look very mysterious."

"Did papa and mamma send you? Oh, I see; you are a private detective. But how in the world did you find us? I thought we had covered our tracks completely."

"You did—except for that cloak; that betrayed you."

"This Chinaman's cloak! Oh, I had to use that to disguise myself. It was spread out over one of those funny idols when I walked out of the room and house. I thought it was beautiful and costly. I intended to return it, but this accident—"

"And your father and mother think some horrible accident has—"

A serious expression appeared on her face.

"I know. They must be terribly worried, but we did not anticipate this. I had a letter ready to post as soon as—"

"As we could get married," interrupted my prisoner.

"I am sorry that I have misunderstood," I stammered in some hesitation, "but I

"OH, I SEE; YOU ARE A PRIVATE DETECTIVE."

may make amends. I promised your parents to return you to them dead or alive and to arrest the perpetrator of the deed. There is no other course for me to choose."

"But we have committed no crime, and you cannot arrest us," Miss Griswold replied sharply.

"No, but you can't get ashore without my assistance. If you will come with me, I will give you time to find a minister, and then if you will go with me my duty has been performed. I might in an emergency act as best man at the marriage."

The mysterious disappearance and return of Helen Griswold did not reflect much glory upon my professional life, for

there were circumstances about it which I could not give to the newspapers, and Mr. Bromley, who had determined to marry her against her private wishes, was prone to talk too much for one who knew very little about the circumstances. Henry Griswold was so overjoyed to receive his daughter back that he was willing to forgive her for marrying the man of her choice, and, what is more characteristic of him, he paid my fee without a question after he knew that I had aided and abetted the couple in their clandestine marriage.

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Notice is hereby given that the registration books of the city of Astoria, for the primary nominating election to be held in this city on Monday the 13th day of November, 1905, will be opened at the Auditor's office in the city hall, on Monday the 23rd day of October, 1905, and will close for said primary election on the 7th day of November, 1905, at the hour of 4 o'clock p. m., said registration books will be again opened on Thursday the 16th day of November,

1905, for the general election to be held in this city on Wednesday the 13th day of December, 1905, and will close on Saturday, the 9th day of December, 1905, at 4 o'clock p. m. All persons must register in order to be entitled to vote.

Dated, Astoria, Oregon, October, 21st, 1905.

OLOF ANDERSON,  
Auditor and Police Judge of the city of Astoria.

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